STARBLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No. 231

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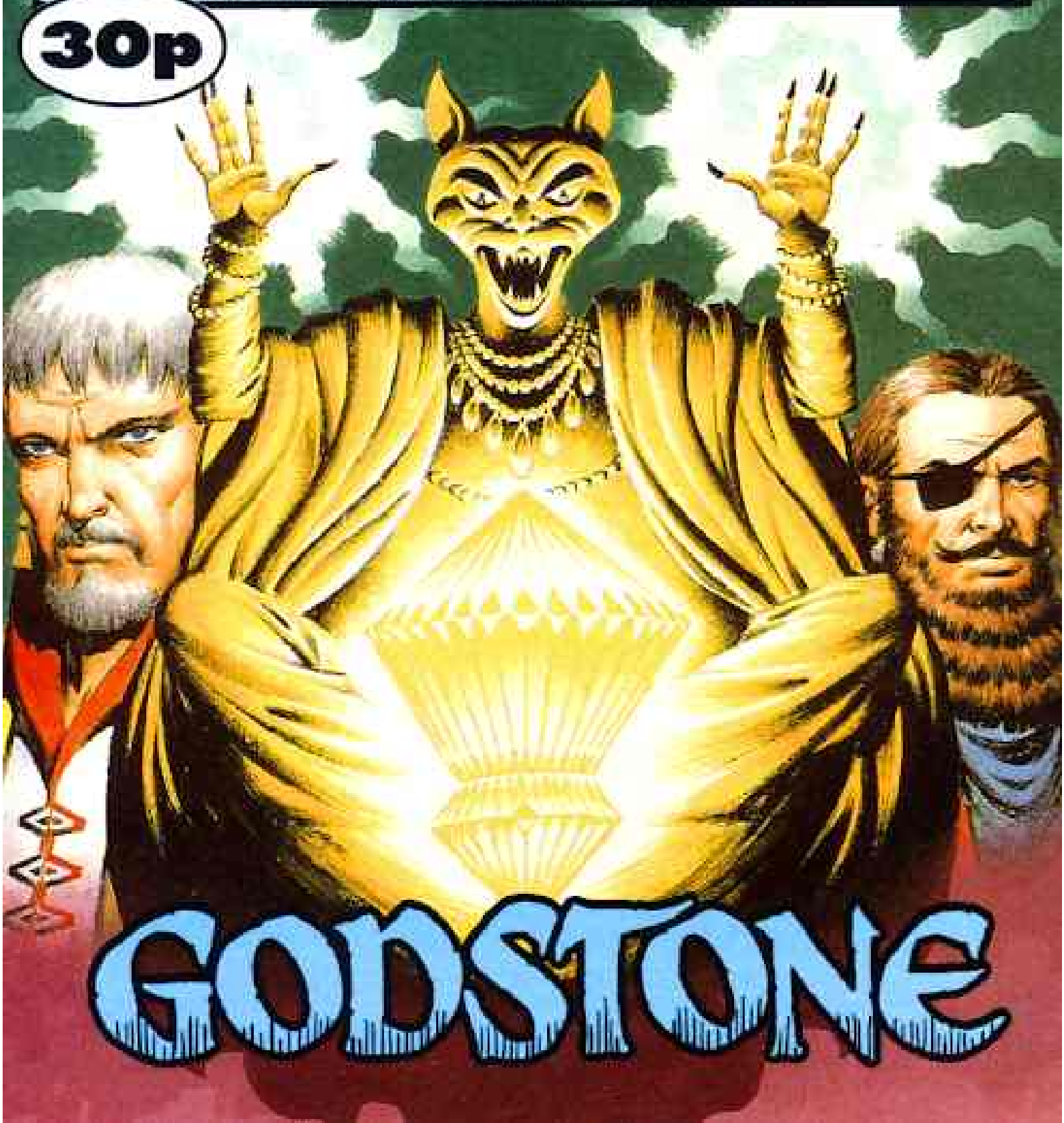


GODSTONE

DON'T FORGET THIS MONTH'S OTHER

NOW ON SALE

Have you missed a copy of Starblazer? Well, we can prevent it happening again — with an annual subscription. All you have to do is write for details to STARBLAZER SUBSCRIPTIONS, D. C. THOMSON & CO., LTD., BANK STREET, DUNDEE DD1 9HU. enclosing an SAE for your reply.

GODSTONE

FOR SEVEN YEARS, KING VEYNE D'ANNEMARC HAD RULED ANGLERRE PEACEFULLY, LEAVING BEHIND THE NIGHTMARE BEGINNING TO HIS REIGN, WHEN THE DEMON SWORD CERASTES HAD COME SO CLOSE TO TAKING HIS LIFE. VEYNE, HIS QUEEN, CIRLE AND THEIR SON KURDIS, WERE ENJOYING HAPPIER TIMES; ANGLERRE WAS PROSPEROUS, BUT AS IS THE NATURE WITH ALL THOSE CHOSEN BY THE GODS TO BE THEIR CHAMPIONS, SUCH PEACEFULNESS COULD NEVER LAST.

IN THE EARLY MORNING OF A FINE SUMMER'S DAY, THE FOREST WAS RUDELY DISTUBED BY A COLOURFUL PARTY OF RIDERS FROM ILLONDRE — KING VEYNE AND HIS COURT, OUT FOR A DAY'S HUNTING.

AT THE KING'S SIDE RODE MYKI SALADOTH, HIS MOST TRUSTED WARRIOR —
CAN'T YOU FRIGHTEN SOMETHING UP, MYKI? I'VE PROMISED CIRLE A BRACE OF FIRE-GULLS FOR SUPPER!
DON'T FRET SO, MY PRINCE! THESE WOODS ARE NEVER SHORT OF GAME.

SUDDENLY, GORGEOUSLY-COLOURED BIRDS ROSE SHRIEKING INTO THE AIR.
FIRE-GULLS, SIRE! RELEASE THE HUNTING WYVERNS!

THE SMALL TRAINED DRAGONS LEAPT EAGERLY AFTER THEIR PREY.
THERE, LITTLE ONE — FLY TRUE!
DO THE WYVERNS RETURN?
SO IT APPEARS, MY PRINCE.

BUT AS THE FLYING CREATURES DREW CLOSER.
WITH DEVASTATING EFFECT, THE DEMONIC CREATURES SWOOPED ONTO THE POORLY-PROTECTED MEN.
VISHENA PROTECT US!

JUST LIKE OLD TIMES, EH, MY PRINCE?
OLD TIMES I'D HOPED GONE FOR GOOD!
SUDDENLY, THE CREATURES FLED BACK INTO THE SKIES.
AFTER THEM! THEIR NEST MUST BE SOMEWHERE CLOSE.
THINK, MY PRINCE! THESE MEN ARE HARDLY SOLDIERS! LET'S RETURN TO ILLONDRE AND CALL OUT THE BLACK EAGLES.
YES . . . YOU ARE RIGHT!

THIS SMELLS OF SORCERY! WE'LL EQUIP AN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE FROM ILLONDRE, AND WIPE THOSE CREATURES OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH!

THE SHAKEN HUNT RETURNED TO A SHOCKED PALACE, DISMOUNTING IN THE INNER COURTYARD.
MY LORD! MY LORD!
CIRLE!

THE QUEEN RUSHED ANXIOUSLY TO HER HUSBAND.
MY LORD, ARE YOU HURT? I HEARD THERE WAS AN ATTACK — SORCEROUS CREATURES!
AYE, CIRLE — TRUE ENOUGH. I SHALL BE RIDING OUT AGAIN SHORTLY, TO DESTROY THE VERMIN. WHERE'S KURDIS?

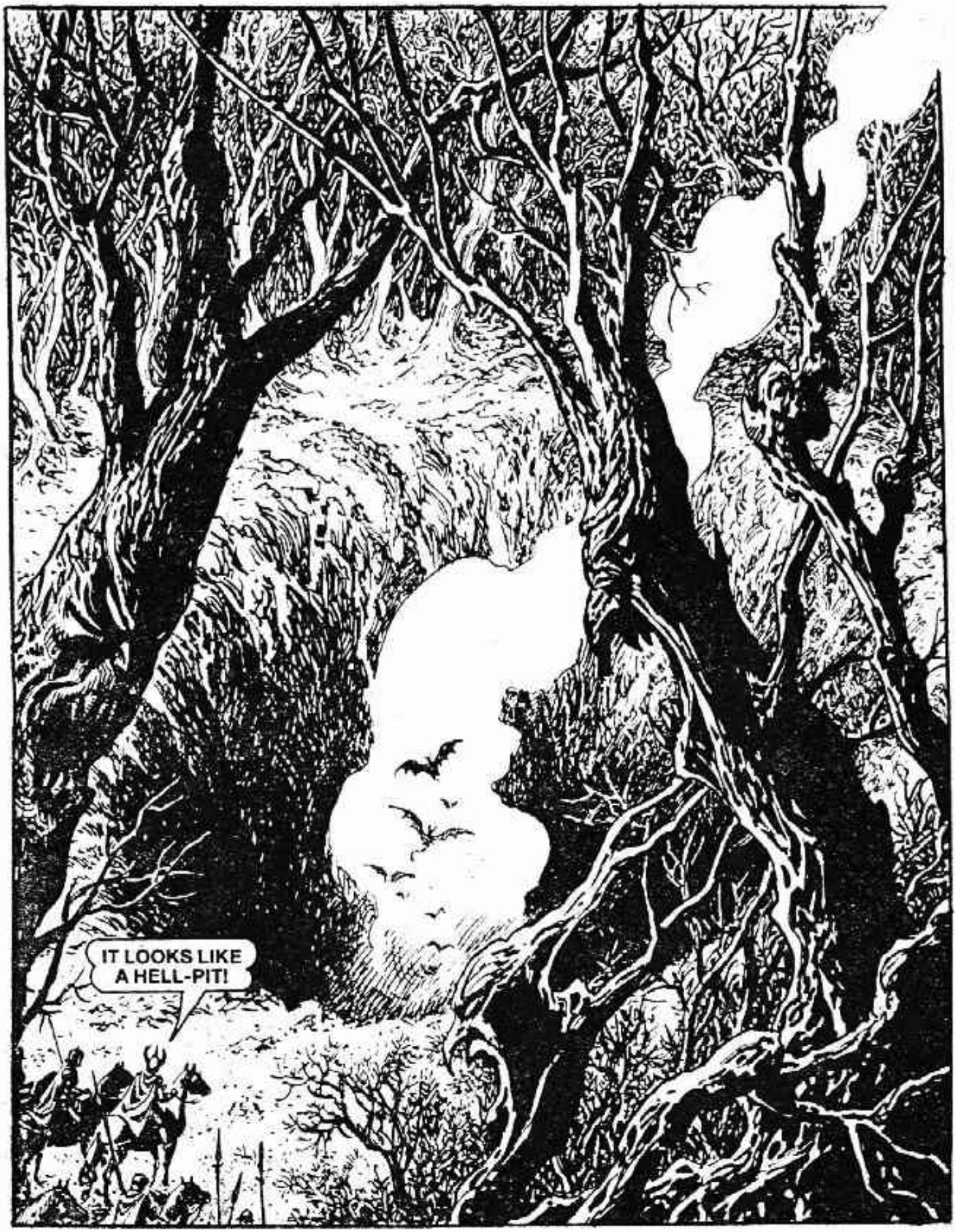
HE'S IN THE NURSERY, PRETENDING TO BE YOU.
I'LL SEE HIM BEFORE I LEAVE AGAIN. SALADOTH . . . FIND CAPTAIN TYLATH AND SEND HIM TO THE AUDIENCE CHAMBER.

PAUSING ONLY TO CHANGE, VEYNE HURRIED TO SEE HIS SON, KURDIS, PRINCE AND HEIR.
I'VE GOT TO GO AWAY FOR A SHORT WHILE, KURDIS — SO YOU'LL BE THE PROTECTOR OF ILLONDRE. LOOK AFTER YOUR MOTHER, EH?
OF COURSE, FATHER.

IN THE AUDIENCE CHAMBER VEYNE GAVE ORDERS TO CAPTAIN GYM TYLATH, THE NEW COMMANDER OF THE BLACK EAGLES.
WE MARCH IMMEDIATELY, CAPTAIN. I WANT ALL OF YOUR MEN, PLUS A COHORT OF CITY GUARDS. THE CREATURES FLED TOWARDS THE WEST — SO THAT WAY SHOULD LIE THEIR NEST.
AYE, MY LIEGE.

I'LL BE READY AS SOON AS I'VE ARMED MYSELF, MY PRINCE.
NOT YOU, SALADOTH! THE QUEEN AND PRINCE KURDIS NEED TO BE GUARDED — AND YOU I TRUST!
MY PRINCE, I PROTEST! DOES THE KING THINK ME TOO OLD?
NO . . . BUT IF I DO NOT RETURN SOMEONE WILL HAVE TO RAISE A FUTURE KING! YOU WERE MY FATHER'S GUIDE AND MINE — NOW BE MY SON'S!
WITHIN A FEW HOURS, THE LARGEST ARMY ANGLERRE HAD WITNESSED FOR OVER SEVEN YEARS WAS MOUNTED UP AND RIDING THROUGH THE GATES OF ILLONDRE, TO THE CHEERS OF ITS CITIZENS.

WILL FATHER BE ALL RIGHT!
OF COURSE, LITTLE PRINCE.
BUT IN HIS HEART, MYKI SALADOTH COULD NOT HELP BUT WORRY.
THEY REACHED THE SPOT OF THE ORIGINAL AMBUSH SHORTLY AFTER MIDDAY.
THIS IS WHERE THEY ATTACKED, CAPTAIN TYLATH.
I'D SAY YOU ALL ESCAPED LIGHTLY, MY LIEGE — JUDGING FROM THOSE CARCASSES!
THE ARMY WAS BROUGHT UP SHARPLY BY WHAT LAY BEFORE THEM —
VISHENA!


IT LOOKS LIKE A HELL-PIT!

AS ONE, MONSTROUS DEMONS SWARMED FROM THE SMOKING PIT.
IS THIS SOME NIGHTMARE?
IF IT BE, SIRE, THEN I PRAY WE SOON AWAKEN!

AT THAT MOMENT, BACK IN ILLONDRE—
WAAAAH
WHAT IN THE NAME OF . . . ?
FATHER!

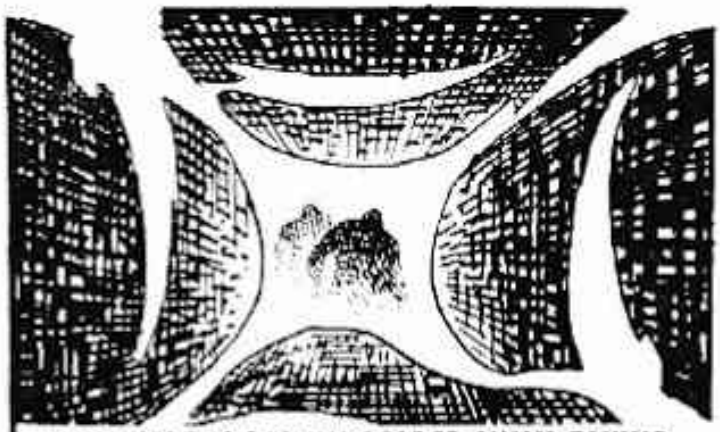
THEN, AS THE SCREAMING GREW IN VOLUME, A WEIRD PORTAL BLAZED INTO EXISTENCE. . .
GUARDS! PROTECT THE QUEEN!
MERCIFUL GODS!

. . . AND A VISION OF HORROR APPEARED.
SAVE THE QUEEN AND PRINCE! I'LL HOLD THEM OFF!

WHILST BACK AT THE HELL-PIT, VEYNE FOUGHT ON, IGNORANT OF THE MENACE TO HIS FAMILY.
'TIS MOST STRANGE! THOUGH THE DEMONS SURGE ABOUT US LIKE WATER, THEY MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO SLAY US!
PERHAPS THEY SEEK ONLY TO HOLD US HERE, MY LIEGE!
VISHENA SAVE US! 'TIS A DIVERSION . . . CIRLE AND KURDIS ARE IN DANGER.

VEYNE WAS RIGHT —

WE HAVE THEM! BRING SALADOTH ALSO — THEN SEAL THE PORTAL!



THE SORCEROUS GATEWAY FADED AWAY, TAKING WITH IT THE DEAFENING HOWLING . . .

MY LIEGE! IT'S GONE — ALONG WITH SOME OF MY BEST MEN!
I PRAY TO THE GODS THIS DOESN'T MEAN THE PIT'S FOUL PURPOSE IS FULFILLED!
REGROUP THE MEN, CAPTAIN! I FEAR WE MUST RETURN TO ILLONDRE WITH ALL SPEED!
REACHING ILLONDRE, VEYNE FOUND THE PALACE IN AN UPROAR.
WHAT'S THE CAUSE OF ALL THIS?
YOUR PARDON, SIRE — IT'S THE QUEEN AND PRINCE . . . !

KURDIS? CIRLE? WHAT HAPPENED?
THEY'VE VANISHED, SIRE! ALONG WITH COMMANDER SALADOTH! THE ROOM THEY WERE EATING IN IS A SHAMBLES, AND TWO GUARDS DEAD — BUT WE CAN'T FIND THEM . . . !
THE KING RUSHED INTO THE PALACE, AND GAZED IN RISING DESPAIR AT THE OVERTURNED CHAMBER.
MERCIFUL GODS! NO!
LATER, THAT NIGHT . . .
HOW FARES THE KING?
SUNKEN IN MELANCHOLY, CAPTAIN. I HOPE YOU BRING HIM GOOD NEWS.

AND THEN HE DREAMED HE WALKED AN ENDLESS PLAIN — A FANTASTIC LANDSCAPE THAT STILL SEEMED STRANGELY REAL.

WHAT PLACE IS THIS? SURELY I DREAM!

A DREAM INDEED, MAJESTY — THOUGH RATHER AN UNUSUAL ONE, I'LL GRANT YOU!
MYRDAN!
THE KING'S OLD FRIEND AND ADVISOR, THE MYSTERIOUS WIZARD MYRDAN, STEPPED OUT OF THE DREAM-MIST.

DESPITE HIS FEARS, THE SIGHT OF HIS OLD MENTOR BROUGHT HOPE BACK INTO VEYNE'S HEART.
HAVE YOU COME BACK TO HELP, MYRDAN?
IF I CAN, MAJESTY. FEAR NOT FOR KURDIS AND CIRLE — SO FAR, THEY ARE SAFE.

THAT IS QIEVA, A FORGOTTEN CITY BEYOND THE DESERT, TO THE EAST OF ANGLERRE. YOU WILL MEET ME THERE — ALONG WITH ANOTHER YOU ALREADY KNOW. THEN WE MUST SET ABOUT FREEING YOUR FAMILY — AND THAT STUBBORN OLD ABARIC, SALADOTH.
WHATEVER YOU SAY, MYRDAN.

I CAN SAY NO MORE, MAJESTY. REMEMBER — I WILL BE WAITING FOR YOU IN QIEVA.
MYRDAN! COME BACK!
BUT THE MAGICIAN-SAGE BEGAN TO FADE, AND THE DREAM ENDED.

. . . DROPPING VEYNE BACK IN THE WAKING-WORLD.
CAPTAIN TYLATH! IS IT MORNING ALREADY?
IT IS, MY LIEGE. BY YOUR LEAVE, MY MEN AND I WILL RESUME THE SEARCH, ONCE WE'VE BROKEN OUR FAST.
NO NEED, CAPTAIN — I HAD A SIGN WHILST I SLEPT. MY SON AND QUEEN ARE SAFE, I'M CERTAIN. FIND MAPS OF THE IRRAPIAN DESERT — MY PATH LIES TO THE EAST IN QIEVA!
ONCE VEYNE EXPLAINED HIS STRANGE VISION TO THE COURT AND NOBLES, IT WAS AGREED THE KING SHOULD WASTE NO TIME, SO . . .
HURRY THEM UP, CAPTAIN — I WANT TO LEAVE BEFORE DARK.
YOU HEARD THE KING! THIS ISN'T A SUMMER-CAMP! MOVE!

ONCE ON THE MOVE, THE ARMY TURNED EAST AND SWEPT THROUGH SUVETHIA — THE KINGDOM RESCUED FROM ITS SORCEROUS TYRANNY BY VEYNE NEARLY EIGHT YEARS EARLIER.

AFTER THREE DAYS' RIDE, THEY REACHED THE HOT, DRY, EASTERN SUVETHIAN BORDERS.

I BELIEVE IT GETS HOTTER FROM HERE ON, MY LIEGE. THESE HORSES WILL NEVER LAST!

THEY WON'T NEED TO, CAPTAIN TYLATH. FROM HERE TO QIEVA WE RIDE THOSE . . .

THE KING POINTED AT A BAND OF ZIGANEAN NOMADS WAITING FOR THEM ON THE FRINGES OF THE IRRAPIAN DESERT WITH A HERD OF CERADONS — THE HARDY DESERT BEASTS OF BURDEN.

ARE YOU SURE YOU COULD FIND NOTHING EASIER ON THE SPINE, MY LIEGE?

WE SHOULD REACH QIEVA IN NO MORE THAN FOUR DAYS, CAPTAIN. ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE.

THEY CAMPED THE NIGHT BY A PARTLY-DRIED OASIS, AND ROSE EARLY IN THE MORNING.

I'VE FOUND OUR POSITION ON THE MAP, CAPTAIN. QIEVA SHOULD BE DUE EAST OF HERE.

AYE, MY LIEGE — BUT FIRST WE HAVE TO CROSS ONE OF THE MOST CURSED WILDERNESSES OF THE WORLD!

SUDDENLY —

VISHENA!

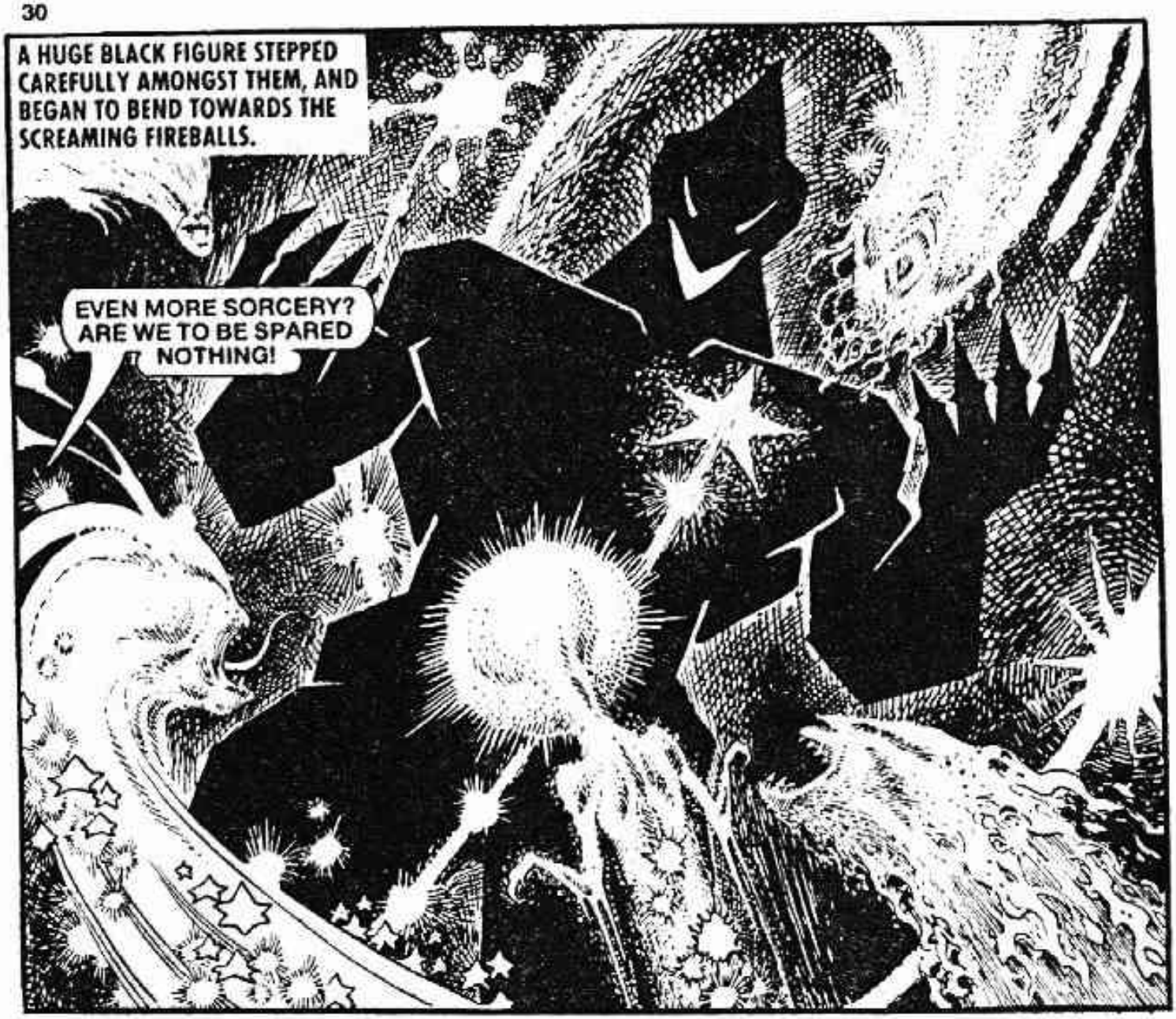
I NEVER KNEW SUCH PREDATORS LIVED IN THE DESERT!
THEY DON'T! I SUSPECT OTHER FORCES MOVE AGAINST US.

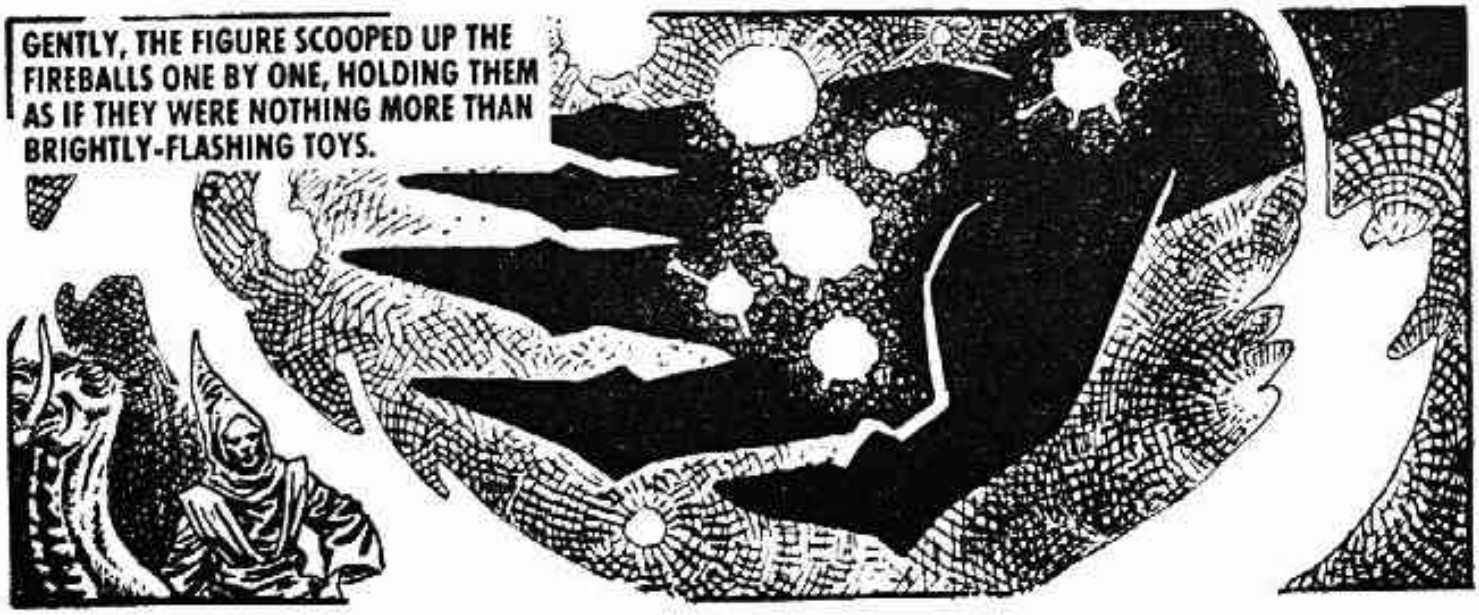
ALL DEAD — EXCEPT FOR THE LARGEST!
YOU PASS ONLY THE FIRST HURDLE, MANLING! DO NOT EXPECT TO EVER LAY EYES ON QIEVA!
THE CREATURE SPRANG . . .

. . . AND FADED INTO INSUBSTANTIAL MIST BEFORE VEYNE'S EYES.
MORE TRICKERY! GET THE MEN MOUNTED, CAPTAIN TYLATH — I WANT TO LEAVE THIS PLACE AS SOON AS WE CAN . . .
. . . FOR I FEAR WE ARE NOT ALONE!
ASTUTELY REASONED, MY ROYAL MANLING. BUT IT WILL DO YOU NO GOOD!
THEY MOVED ON AT SPEED.
I KNOW LITTLE ABOUT THIS WILDERNESS, MY LIEGE — ASIDE THAT IT IS SAID TO BE CURSED.
AYE, THE LEGENDS ARE VAGUE AND CONFUSING, CAPTAIN.

SOME SAY A GREAT DESTRUCTION FELL FROM THE SKY, AND DESTROYED A MIGHTY CIVILISATION. OTHERS, THAT THE MEN OF IRRAPIA DESTROYED THEMSELVES BY ARCANE SORCERY. BUT ALL AGREE, STRANGE THINGS — WARPED THINGS — ROAM THE SANDS.
LIKE THOSE, MY LIEGE?
BLAZING POWER AND DESTRUCTION, THE GLOWING SPHERES SPED ACROSS THE DESERT TOWARDS THEM, HOWLING LIKE A CHORUS OF THE DAMNED.
ONE OF THE FIREBALLS STRUCK A RIDER AND HIS BEAST — BOTH DIED INSTANTLY IN A TERRIBLE CONFLAGRATION.

TWO SPHERES FROM THE ONE! DOES THIS MEAN WHEN ONE OF US IS SLAIN, WE GIVE BIRTH TO A FIREBALL!
LISTEN TO THEM HOWL, MY LIEGE! I FEAR OUR VERY SOULS ARE TRAPPED IN THOSE FLAMES — FEEDING THEM!
BY THE GODS, WE'RE POWERLESS! WE DARE NOT STRIKE OUT — AND IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO AVOID THEM.
MORE MEN AND ANIMALS SUCCUMBED TO THE DRIFTING OBJECTS, EACH TIME CREATING ANOTHER DEADLY FIREBALL.
AND THEN, IT SEEMED THE VERY SUN WAS BLOTTED OUT.
GODS PROTECT US!


A HUGE BLACK FIGURE STEPPED CAREFULLY AMONGST THEM, AND BEGAN TO BEND TOWARDS THE SCREAMING FIREBALLS.
EVEN MORE SORCERY? ARE WE TO BE SPARED NOTHING!


GENTLY, THE FIGURE SCOOPED UP THE FIREBALLS ONE BY ONE, HOLDING THEM AS IF THEY WERE NOTHING MORE THAN BRIGHTLY-FLASHING TOYS.

AND THEN, RAISING THE HOWLING FISTFUL TO ITS LIPS, THE EBONY CREATURE SWALLOWED THEM WHOLE.

A SUDDEN CHANGE OVERCAME THE GIANT, AND IT BEGAN TO SHRINK RAPIDLY TO HUMAN FORM.
WELCOME, KING VEYNE D'ANNEMARC — GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN. IN THE FLESH, THAT IS.
MYRDAN! BY ALL THE GODS . . . !

I APOLOGISE FOR MY TARDINESS, MAJESTY. I HAD NO IDEA HOW POWERFUL OUR ENEMIES HAD GROWN.
WHO ARE OUR ENEMIES, MYRDAN?
I WILL SHOW YOU, MAJESTY — FOR WE GO TO MEET THEM . . .
. . . AND IN AN INSTANT, THEY WERE TRANSPORTED INTO THE VERY HEART OF A BEAUTIFUL, DESERTED CITY. AS MYRDAN'S CLOAK SWIRLED, IT GREW TO ENVELOP THE ENTIRE ARMY . . .
WELCOME TO QIEVA, MAJESTY. THE CITY AT THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD!

MYRDAN LED THEM TO THE CITY WALLS, AND POINTED OUT INTO THE DESERT.
AND THERE, GENTLEMEN, IS THE ENEMY!

BEHOLD! THE HOST OF THE CHAOS WORLDS!
TO THE EAST OF QIEVA, A HIDEOUS ARMY WAS CAMPED.
I'VE PREPARED SOME REFRESHMENT IN THE CITY, MAJESTY — WE'LL RETIRE THERE.
AYE, MYRDAN! WE NEED TO TALK.

CAN WE TRIUMPH, MYRDAN?
WE MUST!
THE ARMY SETTLED INTO A GREAT HALL WHERE THEY WERE WINED AND DINED MAGNIFICENTLY.
I'VE LAID IN WHAT I COULD, MAJESTY. I TRUST IT MEETS WITH YOUR APPROVAL.
IT DOES, MYRDAN — AND THE MEN'S TOO. BUT THEN, THEY'VE EARNED IT!
NOW EXPLAIN TO ME, MYRDAN — WHAT IS THAT HORDE OUTSIDE — AND WHERE ARE MY SON AND WIFE?
KURDIS AND CIRLE HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED BY THE LORDS OF MISRULE, MAJESTY. THE MONARCHS OF THE CHAOS WORLDS HAVE BROKEN THROUGH THE BARRIERS BETWIXT THE PLANES, TO BRING THIS EVIL TO EARTH. BUT HOW, I CANNOT SAY.

CANNOT SAY, MY LORD SORCERER? I UNDERSTOOD YOU TO BE AN INCARNATION OF THE GOD VISHENA HIMSELF — AND THUS ALL KNOWING.
AH — YOU MUSTN'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING THAT ROGUE SALADOTH TELLS YOU, CAPTAIN. APART FROM A FEW CONJURING TRICKS, I ASSURE YOU I AM AS HUMAN AND FALLIBLE AS YOURSELF.
A DREADFUL HUSH FELL AS A HULKING, GOLDEN FIGURE TROD HEAVILY INTO THE HALL AND FACED THE KING.
FALLIBLE INDEED, RAVEN MYRDAN. ELSE I WOULD NOT BE HERE! ONCE I WORE THE FORM OF A GOLDEN SWORD — ANOTHER ASPECT OF THIS SAME BEING. I AM CERASTES, KING VEYNE!

IN AN INSTANT, CAPTAIN TYLATH WAS ACROSS THE TABLE.
WHAT TREACHERY IS THIS? THAT CURSED SWORD WAS FATED TO TAKE THE KING'S LIFE!
HOLD, CAPTAIN! I ASSURE YOU HIS MAJESTY IS IN NO DANGER FROM THIS CREATURE!
YOU MAY RECALL, MAJESTY, THAT THE CURSE IS NO LONGER OPERATIVE —AND WE NEED CERASTES' POWER ONCE MORE!
VERY WELL! MYRDAN, CERASTES — WE WILL RETIRE ELSEWHERE TO DISCUSS THIS.

THE MAGICIAN-SAGE AND GOLDEN CREATURE LED THE KING TO A VAST TEMPLE, DEDICATED TO ALL THE GODS.
THIS IS THE CAUSE OF THY MISFORTUNES, KING VEYNE. ON THIS STOOD THE GODSTONE WHICH ALLOWS THE GODS ACCESS TO THIS WORLD. AGENTS OF THE CHAOS WORLDS HAVE STOLEN IT EFFECTIVELY BANISHING THE GODS, WHILST ALLOWING THEMSELVES THROUGH.
ONLY YOU CAN RECLAIM THE GODSTONE FROM AMONGST THE CHAOS HORDES, MAJESTY. ONLY YOU CAN RESCUE KURDIS AND CIRLE.
WE MUST BECOME ONE!
BECOME ONE WITH YOU? WHY?
ONLY ONE FORCE CAN HOLD BACK THE CHAOS HORDE WHILST THOU SEARCHEST FOR THE GEM: THE LEGION OF THE DEAD — THE SOULS CLAIMED BY MY SWORD.

WHAT DOES HE MEAN, BECOME ONE, MYRDAN? ARE THE GODS MANIPULATING ME AGAIN?
YOU MUST UNITE WITH HIM — YOUR SOUL IN HIS GOLDEN BODY. THUS YOU WILL BECOME INVULNERABLE!
VEYNE WAS SILENT FOR LONG, AGONISING MINUTES, THEN . . .
I AM APPREHENSIVE, MYRDAN, BUT YOU HAVE NEVER FAILED ME. I WILL DO IT.
THEN GIVE ME THY HAND.
AS THEIR HANDS MET, THE TWO FIGURES FLOWED TOGETHER, GREAT HALOES OF OCCULT ENERGY ILLUMINATING THE TEMPLE . . .

. . . AND WHEN ALL WAS AGAIN QUIET, ONLY ONE FIGURE REMAINED.
IT IS DONE, MYRDAN. FOR GOOD OR BAD.
AYE, MAJESTY. NOW YOU MUST CALL FOR OUR ALLIES.
I SUMMON THE LEGION OF THE DEAD!
HIS VOICE ECHOED FROM THE TEMPLE'S ROOF, AND FAR OFF — IN SOME UNNAMED LIMBO — IT SEEMED TO BE ANSWERED.
OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE . . .
WHERE'S THE KING, SORCERER? I HEARD A CRY, AND SAW STRANGE LIGHTS . . . !
PULL YOUR MEN BACK, CAPTAIN — FOR THEIR OWN GOOD! THE KING IS WELL, I ASSURE YOU.

THE TEMPLE DOORS BURST OPEN, AND OUT MARCHED AN ARMY OF DOOMED SOULS — ALL THAT HAD FALLEN TO THE GREAT GOLDEN BLADE KNOWN AS CERASTES, AND WERE NOW IN ITS POWER.

BY THE GODS! WAS THAT THE KING AT THEIR HEAD?
IT WAS, CAPTAIN. NOW, GET THE MEN READY TO DEFEND THE CITY!

THE DEAD LEGION CUT INTO THE HIDEOUS CREATURES OF CHAOS, HACKING AN UNTIRING PATH DEEP INTO THE BOILING RANKS. CERASTES' GOLDEN BODY STRODE LIKE AN UNSTOPPABLE ENGINE OF DESTRUCTION, WHILST VEYNE'S EYES SOUGHT FOR HIS FAMILY.

WHERE ARE QUEEN CIRLE AND PRINCE KURDIS KEPT, HELL-SPAWN?
FIND THEM YOURSELF, DOOMED ONE!
A PAVILION! I'M WILLING TO WAGER IT HOUSES AT LEAST ONE OF THE LORDS OF MISRULE!
STRIKING OUT TOWARDS IT, THE GOLDEN-ARMOURED BODY WADED THROUGH THE FIGHTING AS THOUGH IT WERE A CALM SEA.

I AM DUKE ARONAX OF CHAOS, MORTAL. COME NEARER AND YOUR SOUL IS FORFEIT!
I WILL DO MORE THAN APPROACH, DUKE DEMON . . .

. . . I SHALL TAKE YOUR SOUL WITH ME!
WITHIN A FEW MOMENTS, THE DEMON DUKE WAS DESTROYED, AND VEYNE URGED CERASTES' BODY INTO THE BIZARRE PAVILION.
BY THE GODS! CIRLE! KURDIS! AND SALADOTH!
MY LORD! CAN THAT REALLY BE YOU?

MIRACULOUSLY, THE MAGICAL BONDS FADED AT HIS TOUCH.
FATHER! FATHER!
THANK THE GODS, MY PRINCE! I'D THOUGHT US DAMNED FOR EVER HERE.
TAKE THIS, SALADOTH — I DON'T NEED IT. GET THEM BACK TO QIEVA — THE LEGION OF THE DEAD WILL PROTECT YOU — WHILST I FIND THIS GODSTONE.
A HUGE GEM, MY PRINCE? THOSE HORRORS USED ONE TO DRAG US HERE FROM ILLONDRE — THEN HID IT IN YONDER CAVE.
GODS ABOVE! COULD THAT BE THE ONE?
VEYNE RUSHED TOWARDS THE GLOWING CAVERN, AS SALADOTH LED THE KING'S FAMILY TO SAFETY.

AND BEFORE HIM SAT MYPHAS, ONE OF THE LORDS OF MISRULE.
WELCOME, VEYNE AND CERASTES — UNITED AT LAST, I SEE. OBSERVE THE GODSTONE, WE HAVE IT QUITE SAFE.
WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CARE, CHAOS LORD. BUT NOW IT MUST BE RETURNED TO QIEVA.

MYPHAS HURLED SHIMMERING BOLTS OF OCCULT ENERGY AT THE GOLDEN FIGURE.
I THINK NOT, HYBRID!
YOUR CHAOS-SPAWNED SORCERY IS POWERLESS AGAINST THIS BODY, CREATURE! CERASTES WAS CREATED BY THE GODS THEMSELVES!
SO YOU SAY — BUT UNTIL THIS BAUBLE IS RECLAIMED, THE GODS THEMSELVES ARE POWERLESS!
INDEED, O GLIB-TONGUED MYPHAS OF THE NINTH PIT. AND THOU DOST KNOW I HAVE THE WORDS TO DO THAT VERY THING!
HEARING THAT COLD VOICE ISSUING FROM THE GOLDEN ARMOUR FILLED VEYNE'S HEART WITH A SUDDEN, STARK DREAD.

OBLIVIOUS OF THE MYSTIC BOLTS THAT TORE THE AIR, THE GOLDEN FIGURE SNATCHED UP THE GODSTONE . . .
I CAN'T CONTROL THE LIMBS ANY MORE! CERASTES — WHAT IS THIS BETRAYAL?

IN RESPONSE, STRANGE WORDS OF POWER ECHOED OUT, A GREAT WIND SEEMED TO SUDDENLY HOWL INTO THE CAVERN, DRAGGING THE LORD OF MISRULE'S BODY WITH IT . . .

. . . TO BE TOSSED INTO A HOWLING VOID — A NAMELESS LIMBO FROM WHICH THERE COULD BE NO ESCAPE.
BY ALL THE GODS! WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHAOS LORD?
GONE TO FEED THE JEWEL — THAT THE GATE INTO THY WORLD SHOULD BE OPEN TO THE GODS ONCE MORE, O KING.

INDEED, IT SEEMS THEY ANTICIPATED MY ACTIONS.
AS THEY WATCHED, THE LORDS OF MISRULE PREPARED TO MEET THEIR DIVINE FOES —

AS VEYNE HURRIED TOWARDS QIEVA, THE BATTLE ABOVE HIM GREW IN FEROCITY.

BACK IN THE BELEAGURED CITY, THE DEFENDERS WATCHED IN AWE.
BY ALL THAT'S WONDERFUL! THAT I SHOULD LIVE TO WITNESS THIS!
SAVE THE ADORATIONS UNTIL LATER, MYKI! OUR KING HAS RETURNED — WITH THE JEWEL!
THANK VISHENA YOU SUCCEEDED, MAJESTY!
TO THE TEMPLE, WIZARD! THE PRECIOUS GODS CANNOT TRIUMPH UNTIL THIS GEM SITS ONCE MORE IN THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD!
MYRDAN FOLLOWED TO THE TEMPLE, WHERE THE GODSTONE WAS RESTORED TO ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE ONCE MORE.
THE JEWEL IS RETURNED. BALANCE IS RESTORED.

THE BREACH IS REPAIRED, MY BROTHERS! THE CHAOS WORLDS ARE ONCE AGAIN BANISHED TO THE VOID.

AT THE MOMENT THE JEWEL WAS REPLACED, THE GODS BLAZED WITH RENEWED ENERGIES, AND THE LORDS OF MISRULE FLED BEFORE THEIR BRILLIANCE.

YOU PLAY A FOOLISH GAME, CERASTES! THE CURSE IS LIFTED — YOU HAVE NO CALL ON VEYNE'S LIFE!
DOST THOU REALLY THINK I CARE FOR THY CURSE? THROUGH THE INTRIGUES OF VISHENA AND THEE, I WAS CHEATED OF MY DUE — A LIFE. NOW WILL I HAVE VENGEANCE!

NO!
WHEN MY LORD VISHENA HATH FINISHED, HE WILL SUMMON ME TO BE ONE OF THE SIX BLADES OF FATE AGAIN. AND WHEN I AM ONCE MORE LOCKED WITHIN THAT METALLIC BODY, SO WILL THE SOUL OF THY KING — MY COMPANION FOR ETERNITY!

MYRDAN LASHED OUT WITH A DEADLY, SORCEROUS ATTACK — BUT WITH NO EFFECT.
YOU WILL NOT SUCCEED, CREATURE!
THY PUNY POWERS CANNOT HURT ME!
WITHOUT WARNING, A STUNNING BOLT OF MYSTIC FORCE SLAMMED INTO THE MAGICIAN-SAGE—

BACK, RAVEN MYRDAN! ATTACK MY FATHER ONCE MORE, AND I WILL ROAST THEE WHERE THOU DOST STAND!
THE SHOCKINGLY-TRANSFORMED CIRLE STEPPED TOWARDS THEM.

CIRLE! NOT YOU?
OF COURSE! CERASTES STOLE THE GODSTONE, ALLOWING THE CHAOS WORLDS IN. HE THEN ARRANGED MY "ABDUCTION", KNOWING YOU WOULD FLY TO MY RESCUE, AND FALL STUPIDLY INTO HIS TRAP. YOU HAVE ALL ACTED LIKE THE PUPPETS WE KNEW YOU WOULD!
AYE! A LENGTHY PLAN BY HUMAN STANDARDS, BUT A FRUITFUL ONE. AND ALL THANKS TO SHE WHO IS MY DAUGHTER — CIRLE!
AS THE TWO CREATURES' LAUGHTER RANG THROUGH THE TEMPLE, MYRDAN GATHERED UP ALL THE POWER HE COULD.

THE MYSTIC BOLT SHATTERED CIRLE'S HASTILY-ERECTED SHIELD, AND SENT HER CRASHING ACROSS THE TEMPLE FLOOR.
THE GAME IS NOT ENDED YET, WITCH!

TEARING THE VERY AIR ASUNDER WITH THE FEROCITY OF THEIR ATTACK, MAGICIAN-SAGE AND DEMON-WITCH ROSE AS EACH SOUGHT TO RIP THE OTHER APART.

BY THE GODS! THIS IS NO PLACE FOR MERE MORTALS, CAPTAIN!
WE MUST GET PRINCE KURDIS TO SAFETY, COMMANDER SALADOTH!

WITH A DEAFENING ROAR, THE EMBATTLED SORCERERS EXPLODED THROUGH THE ROOF AND INTO THE GATHERING TWILIGHT.

OBSERVE! MY LORD VISHENA APPROACHES! THY MOMENT OF DOOM IS HERE, O KING!
LEAVE MY FATHER ALONE!
EVADING THE SOLDIERS' GRASP EASILY, KURDIS RAN WEEPING AT THE GOLDEN FIGURE.
AS THE FURIOUS PRINCE LAUNCHED HIMSELF AT THE HULKING FIGURE, BOTH WERE ENGULFED IN AN EXPLOSION.
NO!

WHILST ABOVE, THE WEAKENED FIGURES OF MYRDAN AND CIRLE STILL FOUGHT ON DOGGEDLY.
WE ARE TOO WELL MATCHED, WIZARD. NEITHER CAN WIN!
YOU WILL PAY FOR THE GRIEF YOU HAVE CAUSED VEYNE, CIRLE. EVEN IF IT MEANS MY DEATH!
WHAT MEANS THIS!
GIANT HANDS SNATCHED THEM OUT OF THE AIR, PREVENTING FURTHER MAGIC.
VISHENA'S HUGE FACE PEERED AT THEM.
I WILL HEAR NO MORE TALK OF DEATH, MYRDAN. TOO MANY HAVE DIED NEEDLESSLY ALREADY.
AS THOU DOST COMMAND, LORD VISHENA. BUT WHAT OF CERASTES, AND CIRLE HERE?

VISHENA STEPPED TO THE TEMPLE RUINED BY THE DEADLY FORCES SET FREE WITHIN ITS WALLS.
SUCH DISRESPECT IN A HOUSE OF THE GODS! YET I SEE THY PROBLEM IS PARTLY SOLVED, MYRDAN

RAISING HIMSELF OUT OF THE RUBBLE, KING VEYNE WAS ONCE MORE RESTORED TO HIS OWN BODY.
I LIVE! BUT WHAT OF MY SON? KURDIS!

WHAT IS THIS, CERASTES? WHO ARE YOU?
DO YOU NOT RECOGNISE ME, FATHER?

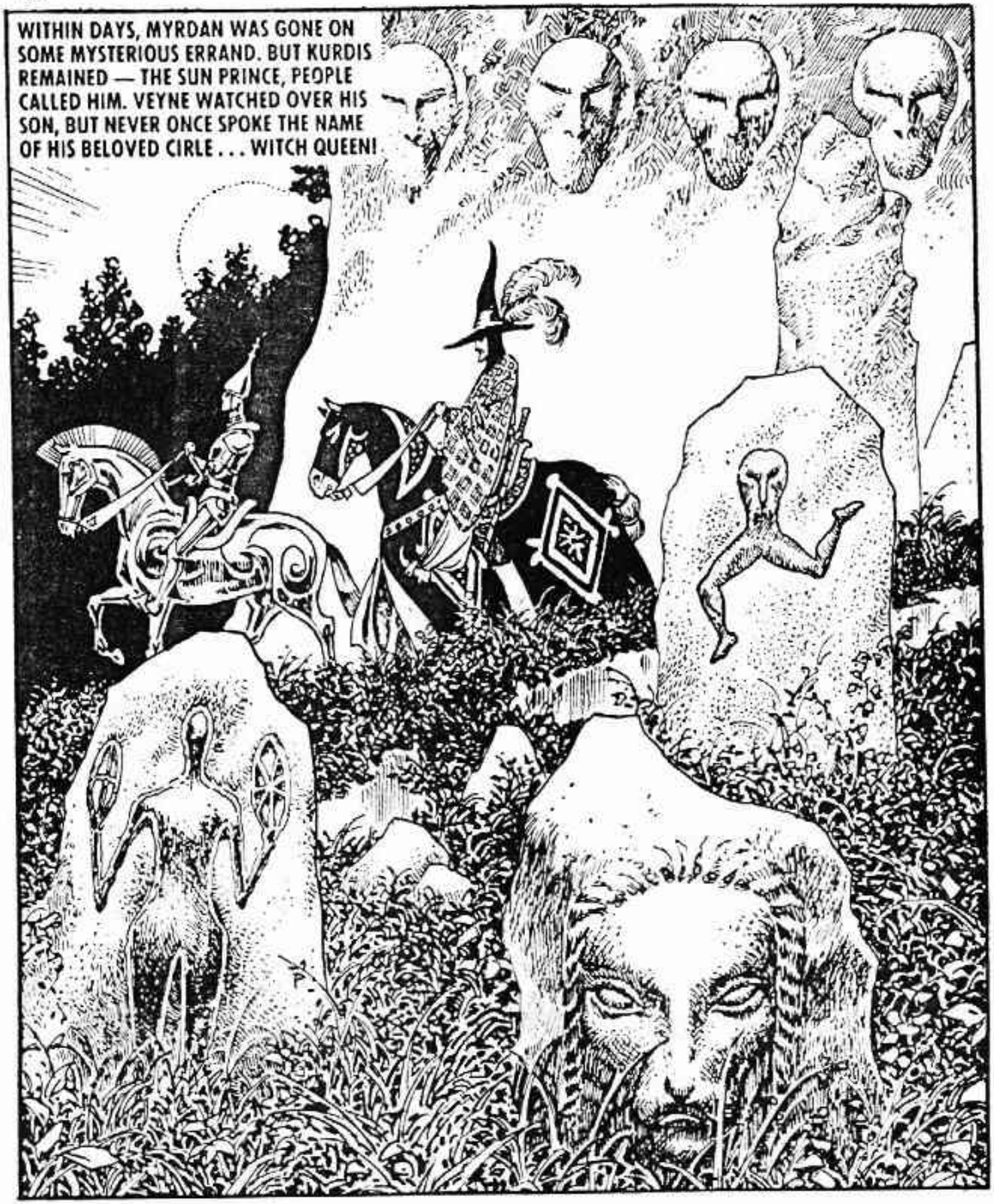
CERASTES IS NO MORE. WHEN WE CLASHED, THE CHILD AND THE MONSTER DIED TO CREATE WHAT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU. BOTH HUMAN AND SUPERNATURAL — THE EVIL DESTROYED FOREVER.
HEARING HIS SON'S VOICE, VEYNE COULD NOT DOUBT WHO THE RADIANT BEING WAS.
IT WOULD SEEM I LOSE A SERVANT, ONLY TO GAIN ONE. THERE IS A DESTINY IN THIS, KURDIS D'ANNEMARC, SO BE READY — FOR ONE DAY SOON I WILL CALL THEE. AS FOR THEE, CIRLE — THOU ART BANISHED TO THE CHAOS WORLDS FOR THY CRIMES, NEVER TO RETURN.

BUT NOW I HAVE A CITY TO REBUILD, AND THOU ART FAR FROM HOME, FAITHFUL VEYNE . . .

AS THE DAZZLING WINDS GREW, VEYNE FELT HIMSELF LIFTED UP.

. . . AND A MOMENT LATER, UNDER FAMILIAR STARS, HE FOUND HIMSELF BACK IN THE COURTYARD OF HIS PALACE AT ILLONDRE.

FARE THEE WELL, LORD VISHENA — FOR WE WILL MEET AGAIN.



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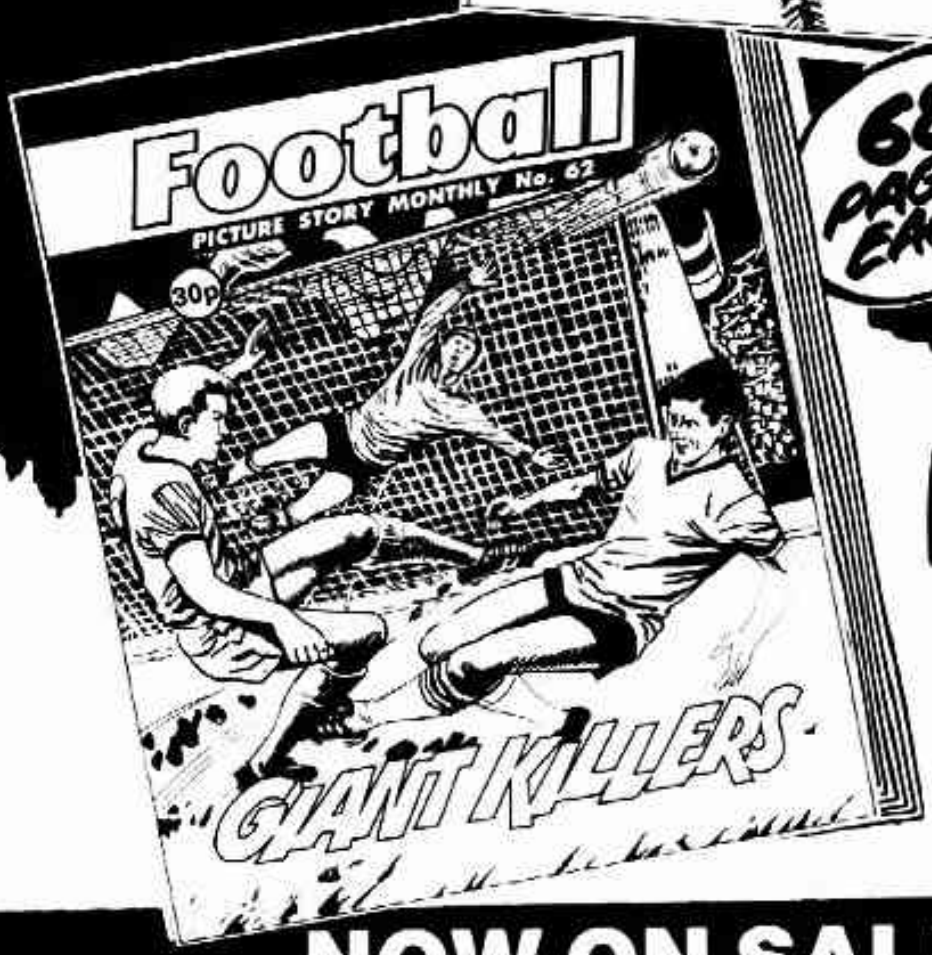

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